

Castro Adobe State Historic Park



Historical Recipes:

There are many recipes that can be prepared at school before or after visiting the Castro Adobe State Historic Park. A few are included under Activities in the Castro Adobe Curriculum. Here are others that might be practical to make at school, or have parents make and bring in to school for the class.

Thick Lentil Soup

(Lentils were commonly grown on ranchos.)

Ingredients:

2 tbsp. olive oil
 6 slices bacon, chopped
 1 onion, minced
 1 clove garlic, minced
 2 green or red bell peppers, minced
 4 peeled carrots, chopped
 3 stalks celery, minced
 16 ounces lentils
 3 quarts stock or water
 2 cups tomato juice OR tomato puree
 salt and pepper to taste
 2 ounces diced pimiento (in jar)

Directions:

Saute onion, garlic, and celery in hot olive oil until softened. Add the rest of the chopped vegetables, the lentils, the broth, and tomato juice. Fry bacon in separate pan to render some of the fat and add to the soup. Simmer until tender and the soup is beginning to thicken—about 1 ½ - 2 hours. Toward the end, add salt and pepper and the diced pimientos. If the soup is too thick, add more tomato juice or water.

Fancy Beans with Chiles

Different types of beans were commonly raised on the ranchos. One kind is the pinto beans, now found in the Lompoc area.

Ingredients:

1 pound pink pinto beans (They're from the Lompoc area of California. Plain pink beans will do.)

1 pound ham hocks

2-3 tbsp. olive oil

2 medium onions, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 large can green chiles, diced

1 7 ounce can green chile salsa (Do not add salsa if you plan to refry leftover beans later.)

salt to taste, added after several hours of cooking time

freshly ground pepper to taste

Directions:

In a large skillet sauté minced garlic, chopped onions, and ham hocks in hot oil, until the onions are softened. Place beans (which have been rinsed and picked over for stones) in a large pot. Add the onions, garlic, and ham hocks and cover with cold water. If the beans should seem to need more liquid, always add hot water. After two hours of simmering, add the minced chiles and salsa. Simmer for at least two hours more, adding salt to taste the last half hour of cooking. (Taste the beans before adding salt; the ham hocks will add salt too.)

Ensalada de Nopalitos

During the Rancho Era many ranchos used nopal cactus as fences. The fruit of the nopal cactus is called prickly pear or tuna. They are still eaten today, and can be bought in some supermarkets. The "leaves" of the nopal cactus are called nopalitos. The smallest nopalitos are the most tender and the ones used in recipes like this one:

Ingredients:

1 ½-2 pounds of nopalitos (canned nopalitos can be substituted)
 3-4 tbsp. olive oil
 2 tbsp. vinegar
 ½ small onion
 salt to taste
 fresh cilantro, minced
 1-2 minced jalapenos en escabeche (or jalapenos that have been roasted over flames and peeled)

Directions:

Scrape off the stubs of spines left on the cactus leaf; you do not have to peel off the thin, outer layer of green skin, unless your cactus leaf is older with a tougher outer skin. Julienne the nopalitos into shoestring size. Steam or boil in a couple inches of water, until tender. This takes about 10 minutes. Immediately drain the nopalitos in a colander placed in a sink under running cold water. You must rinse off the sticky substance clinging to the cactus. (It is a good idea to rinse off canned nopalitos in the same way.) Toss the warm nopalitos with the olive oil, vinegar, salt, minced onion, jalapenos and cilantro. You may add a few cubes of sharp Cheddar cheese or crumble some Mexican queso fresco over the top.

Here is a similar recipe from Youtube in Spanish. She adds tomatoes and avocados.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o22d9bQF35g>

Cajeta

(Glazed Prickly Pear Pulp)

Cajeta is a concentrated fruit jam. Small portions of cajeta were wrapped in corn husks and packed in Indian baskets; these were then stored in a cool room to keep.

Old Fashioned Spanish (Mexican) Rice

Ingredients:

1 C long-grain white rice
 ¼ C olive oil
 1 clove garlic mashed with 1 ½ tsp. salt
 ½ onion, minced
 3 tsp. ground chile powder
 2 ½ C water (or stock)

Directions:

Fry the rice in hot olive oil until golden and there is a bit of a popcorn smell. Add onion, garlic and salt and sauté a bit more. Tip the pan and pour off any excess oil. Add the chile powder and water. Cook rice for about 10 minutes on medium heat until you see little holes forming in the center, the sign the rice has absorbed most of the liquid. Turn the heat to low, cover it and steam for an additional 10 minutes. Turn off the heat, but leave the pot undisturbed for an additional 20 minutes.

Cocido Recipe (Mexican Beef Soup)

The Cocido Soup Recipe

can be accompanied by Mexican rice, fresh salsas and the traditional homemade corn tortillas. Serves 8

Ingredients:

2 quarts water
 3 pounds beef shank, cut
 ½ white onion, cut in wedges
 3 garlic cloves, peeled
 2 large carrots, peeled and cut into chunks
 2 large ears of corn, husked and cut across the cob into 1 ½ inch pieces
 2 medium red skin potatoes, scrubbed and quartered
 1 stalk celery, cut into 1 inch
 1/3 head green cabbage, sliced
 2 zucchini cut into 1 inch pieces
 1/3 cup fresh cilantro leaves
 Salt added to taste

Directions:

Begin to cook the meat in a pot of water, at boiling point skim the impurities from the surface as appropriate. Add the onion and garlic then reduce the heat and cook until the meat is tender, which takes about 2 hours. Add salt to taste, then add the potatoes, corn, carrot, cabbage and celery and continue cooking for 15 to 20 minutes. Then add zucchini and cook just long enough until the vegetables are tender crisp. Before removing from flame add the cilantro leaves.
 Serve.

Some Interesting Facts about the Rancho Era

Olive Oil

Olive oil was an important ingredient in Early California cooking. Here's a description from the old Mission Santa Barbara describing how it was made:

Spread olives upon mat and leave them until wrinkled from ripeness. Crush them thoroughly in the mortars used by old women. Place olives in a large kettle. Add water to give olives the consistency of atole paste. After boiling thoroughly, take part of the olives and put into a rough sack or coarse cloth, allowing the oil to pass through. Tie the sack well and press it into a large dish of hot water. Add hot water to the olive dough many times until nothing but pure water passes through. When an olive press is not available, press the sack between the boards of a carpenter's press. After the juice has been crushed from the olives, place it upon the fire with water and boil moderately. With a ladle, skim into an earthen pot, all of the oil, which will rise to the surface. To make very pure, pour oil into a spotless kettle with a lot of hot water. The dregs will sink to the bottom. The olive oil will rise to the surface of the water.

Bull's Head Barbecue

Grizzly bears were frightening intruders, so grizzly bear and wild bull fights were encouraged. Sometimes the grizzly bear won, other times the wild bull won.

On very special occasions, it was a custom on some ranchos to barbecue the bull's head. It took a lot of people to gather and prepare this particular barbecue.

Necessary Items:

Smooth stones

Hardwood and kindling

At least 3 shovels

Long-handled hook

2 burlap sacks

muslin

baling wire

heavy gloves

metal sheet or tarp to cover the pit

wheelbarrow

heavy board on which to serve bull's head

Ingredients:

1 bull's head

Bunches of fresh mint, oregano, and rosemary

Directions:

Dig a pit four feet square and four feet deep. (Do this the day before the barbecue.)

Dig a ledge two feet down around the pit, and make it two feet wide. (This makes it easier to tend the fire and getting the cooked head out of the pit.)

Pile the stones in a deep layer at the bottom of the pit.

Start the fire the night before the barbecue with kindling on top of the stones. Add hard wood to the fire throughout the night prior to the barbecue—from 15-20 hours ahead of serving time.

Wash the bull's head thoroughly with buckets of water or a garden hose. All hair was left on the head, and bouquets of mint, oregano, and rosemary were stuffed into the ears and mouth. Wrap the bull's head with wet muslin and then wet burlap secured well by baling wire bound in several directions. Between 5 and 6 a.m. the head is lowered onto the hot stones of the pit. The head is then covered with a cross-cross of palm leaves in a thick layer. (This protected the head from falling dirt, and it also kept the heat in. In later years they used sheet metal for this.) Once the head is covered with the palm leaves or sheet metal, shovel an even layer of dirt on top, and then tamp it down with many strokes of the shovels. It took between 7 and 8 hours for the head to be cooked. Two men carefully shoveled dirt off the pit. They removed the hot sheet metal or leaves, and using shovels and a hood they lifted the head out and placed it on a wheelbarrow. It was moved to a grassy area where it was carefully unwrapped.

The eyes and cheeks were considered the most desirable delicacies, and given to the most important person to eat. The head was then moved to a large wooden board garnished with fresh herbs. The meat was pulled off with a fork and served with fresh salsa.